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ABSTRACT

Over the past several years, outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases have drawn greater attention to the problem of low immunization rates in the U.S. In response to this problem, the federal government created the Vaccines for Children program as a foundation for a new national immunization policy to ensure proper and timely immunizations for children. This guide is intended to aid state and local policy makers to better understand the Vaccines for Children program. The guide begins with a general introduction to the problem of low immunization rates. The second section of the guide describes the shortcomings in our current immunization systems, in the areas of outreach, education, access, and costs. The third section examines current systems for purchasing and distributing vaccines, including universal purchase, Medicaid purchase, and fee for service. The fourth section details the Vaccines for Children program. The fifth section describes opportunities for advocates, including understanding program details, enlisting participation, and understanding demand. The sixth section details five programs that work and their strategies for raising immunization rates. The seventh section details 10 questions to help advocates analyze their individual programs. The eighth section provides a checklist of advocacy opportunities for improving immunization rates. The ninth section comprises the major portion of the guide and provides state-by-state and national statistical and tabular data in the following areas: (1) reaching families; (2) delivering immunizations; and (3) covering the cost. The last two sections of the guide contain resources and data sources for further information. (SD)

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